

Gender Representation in English Textbook Used in Grade x of Senior High School

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Abstract

This study aims at finding how English textbook published by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia for Grade X of senior high school represents gender. It is a descriptive work using content analysis as its design in looking at how gender is represented in the book both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings showed that the text book is generally gender friendly in which it represents women and men in mostly equal manner. However, it is still not free from stereotyping attached to its female and male characters. Furthermore, the differences in verbosity, the use of question form and intensifiers by female and male characters are identified.

Key words: gender representation, English textbook, Grade X

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilakukan dengan tujuan untuk mengkaji representasi gender di dalam buku paket yang diterbitkan oleh Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Indonesia untuk siswa Kelas X di Sekolah Menengah Atas. Penelitian ini merupakan karya deskriptif yang menggunakan analisis isi sebagai desain penelitian dalam mempelajari sejauh mana gender direpresentasikan di dalam buku tersebut secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Gambar dan teks bacaan yang terdapat di dalam buku dicatat dan dianalisis untuk menyingkap representasi gender di dalamnya. Temuan penelitian dan hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa buku teks yang dikaji secara umum telah menyajikan materi pelajaran yang ramah gender dengan cara merepresentasikan perempuan dan laki-laki secara setara. Namun, buku ini belum terlepas dari stereotip-stereotip yang dilekatkan pada tokoh perempuan dan laki-laki di dalamnya. Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menemukan adanya perbedaan-perbedaan dalam *verbosity*, penggunaan kalimat tanya dan *intensifier* oleh tokoh perempuan dan laki-laki.

Kata kunci: representasi gender, buku teks Bahasa Inggris, Kelas X

Introduction

Since the second awakening of feminism in the 1970s, gender has become a major and popular issue brought under scrutiny in various branches of academic social studies (Storey, 2009). One of the countless examples of research

discussion in this area is about gender stereotyping by Best (2003). In her article, Best elaborated that earlier studies on language and gender concluded that men and women use different sets of adjectives to describe their characters. These patterns then turn into gender

stereotyping which specifically refers to the beliefs of several people that men and women use distinct speech patterns, express their ideas in certain ways, and are described with different words or phrases highlighting their sex differences.

With the increasing awareness of the people about issues related to gender, schools should be one of the first places where gender equality is introduced and taught to the younger generation. Consequently, learning materials or textbooks become important means to provide students with more information about gender equality and its significance in today's world although soft wording is necessary in doing so. However, a textbook might also disseminate an inappropriate ideology to its users. An author of a textbook tends to embed certain ideology in his or her work in which the ideology might be biased. For example, to avoid controversy, a textbook writer decided to describe men and women in their stereotyped characters and attributes that are commonly perceived or believed by most people in relation to both sexes.

Although studies on the depiction of gender in school textbooks is not as much as those done in media (Witjatmoko, 2016), a few had been done in various contexts. Johansson and Malmsjö (2009) and Ånmark (2015) are two from few scholars who conducted research on gender representation in English textbooks. Their studies show similar results in which female and male are represented unequally in the books they studied, in which representation on men is greater than that on women. In addition, the results also show stereotypes that are generally attached to women and men. Similar results are also shown in various research on the same topic conducted in Indonesian context. Among these are Ummu Salamah (2014), Agni Kusti Kinasih (2016), and Witjatmoko (2016).

This research is conducted with the main aim to investigate gender representation in English textbook used in Senior High School and of examining its suitability as a learning material in regard to its attempts of depicting gender. The

book is the main English teaching material in public high schools where Indonesian national curriculum 2013—which is commonly called *K-13* or *Kurikulum 13*—is used. The book is published by the Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia and is widely used in the country.

Research Method

The method used in this study is a mixed method combining both quantitative and qualitative analysis which is expected to provide deeper and thorough yet unbiased insight about gender representation in a textbook (Dörnyei, 2007). Quantitatively, the study aimed to find out: 1) the number of female and male characters in illustrations and texts, 2) gender focus in dialogues, talk initiators, and the amount of talk by each gender, 3) types of occupations given for female and male characters, 4) types of non-professional activities attached to characters from both genders, and 5) adjectives used to describe them. Complementing the quantitative data, this research uses some more qualitative analysis to explain further how each gender is represented by analyzing verbosity, the use of question form and intensifiers by both female and male characters in the book.

The primary instrument used for this research is a list of categories that has been developed by Diktas (2011) that enables the research to collect, organize and analyze the acquired data. However, since it is highly unlikely for a book to present exactly 50% female characters and 50% male characters in order to equally represent both genders, a criterion concerning percentage gap is developed. The current study follows such criterion which is used by Witjatmiko (2016) to analyze gender representation in which the percentage gap is divided into three: 0%-15% gap is considered as 'balanced', 16%-25% gap is considered as 'fairly balanced', and >25% difference falls into the category of 'somewhat imbalanced'.

To answer the problems of the research, theory of gender stereotyping by Eckert and

McConnell-Ginet (2003) and theories of women's and men's language by Lakoff (1973) and Coates (1986) are used.

Findings And Discussion

This section elaborates the gender representations in the English textbook designed for the tenth graders of Indonesian high school students entitled *Bahasa Inggris*. This section is divided into three subsections: gender representation in illustration, gender representation in texts, and the use of language by female and male characters.

1. Gender Representation in Illustration

Gender representation in illustration in the textbook is measured through the number of female and male characters.

Table 1: Occurrence of female and male characters in illustration

Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	41	39.05%
Male	64	60.95%
Total	105	

The chart indicates that when it comes to gender representation in pictures, the textbook is in favor of male character visibility compared to the opposite gender. This creates a percentage gap as great as 21,90%, in which the textbook understudy achieves only a "fairly balanced" gender material in terms of the presence of female and male characters in its illustrations.

However, most female characters in this textbook are illustrated as students and teachers while male characters have more varied roles shown in their images such as teachers, successful company workers, pilots, and sportsman. Although some prominent figures of women are also shown such as famous singer and a female national hero, this is still insufficient for the textbook to be considered presenting equal gender representation in its illustrations. Such imbalanced portrayals of women might make the

students to think that women have rather limited roles available for them to play in the society, an idea that is contrary to the condition of the real world.

2. Gender Representation in Texts

The number of female and male characters in reading materials of the textbook indicates its gender representation in texts. The result shows that occurrence of female and male characters in texts follows the trend of that in illustrations.

Table 2: Occurrence of female and male characters in texts

Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	89	44.95%
Male	109	55.05%
Total	198	

Looking at the data presented in the table and referring to the minimal threshold that has been decided earlier, it can be determined that the percentage difference of gender visibility in texts is balanced because the gap between the proportion of female and male characters is only 10,1%.

Nevertheless, when deeper analysis is conducted to find out whether this balance in gender proportion is also reflected in the activeness of each gender, which refers to the active role they are playing in dialogs, it is found out that there are more female active characters compared to male characters. The active male-characters constitutes only 33,94% of the total number of male characters identified in the book while the proportion of active female characters is amounted to 48,31%. This indicates that female characters are given more roles than the opposite gender despite their low occurrence.

Since texts is a vast source of data for gender representation, the research decides to categorize several aspects involving texts in which depiction of each gender can be identified. These categories include gender focus, talk initiator and the amount of talk in dialogs, occupations attached to female and male characters, non-

professional activities done by female and male characters, and adjectives used to describe female and male characters.

2.1 Gender focus, talk initiator and the amount of talk in dialogs

Table 3: Focus of gender in dialogs

Gender focus	No. of dialogs	Percentage
Female-only	6	28.57%
Male-only	5	23.81%
Both genders	10	47.62%
Total	21	

The table indicates that textbook understudy has more dialogs done by female-only than by male-only characters although the number of the former is only slightly higher than that of the latter. Mixed-gender dialogs, on the other hand, dominates the data by presenting 47,62% with 10 dialogs from the total dialogs. Referring to the minimal threshold that has been decided earlier, it can be determined that the percentage gap of the number of dialogs by one particular gender is balanced because the difference between female-only and male-only dialogs is 4,76%, which is far below the 15% maximum threshold.

In regards to giving chance for the characters to initiate conversations, the result on talk initiator counting shows that the book gives perfectly equal opportunity for female and male characters to initiate conversations—which is five times each. This could indicate that the conversations are set to be gender friendly by equally giving initiator roles to both female and male characters. Nevertheless, further analysis on the amount of talk by each gender by finding the number of words uttered by each of them shows different trend.

Table 4: The Amount of Talk by Each Gender in Mixed-Gender Dialogs

Number of speakers		Number of words uttered	
Number	%	Number	%

Female	13	48,15%	446	52,78%
Male	14	51,85%	399	47,22%
Total	27		845	

The table depicts that there are more male speakers in mixed-gender dialogs even though it is only one speaker more than female speakers. Interestingly, the data collected shows that female characters speak more than the males although their number is smaller. In average, a female speaker utters 34 words while a male character utters only 28 words. Similar trend is also achieved when the number of words uttered by female and male characters in all types of dialogs are collected. It shows that female characters utter 738 words compared to 619 words uttered by male characters.

This might indicate that women are given more chance to speak their mind in the textbook, which is a reflection of what is happening in the real world where women are given more room and freedom to express their ideas. This result also confirms the theory by Coates on verbosity (1986) believing that women tend to speak more than men although topics of discussion matter in defining participation of each gender in the whole conversation. More importantly, this arrangement will give more chance for female students using the book to practice their language while reciting the dialogs.

2.2 Occupations attached to female and male characters

Table 5: List of jobs given to female and male characters

Female	Male

Housewife	Student
Student	Teacher
Doctor	Barista
Painter	Tourism worker
Baker	Furniture salesperson
Singer	Fisherman
Teacher	Nurse
	Company director
	Branch manager
	Musician
	Football player
	Police officer
	Athlete
	Singer
	Engineer
	Village head
	Merchant
	Mechanic

The table clearly shows that male characters have twice more occupation choices compared to the female characters, which is 18 to 8 respectively. Converting these numbers into percentage, the proportion gap between occupations attached to female characters to those assigned to male characters achieves the figure of 38,46%. By looking at this percentage, therefore, the book is considered unequal in the way it represents the proportion of occupations for both genders.

In addition to this imbalanced representation in occupations, further analysis shows that stereotyping happens to both female and male characters in the textbook. Female characters are depicted to work in areas that are traditionally attached to them, such as baker and teacher (Alberta Human Services, 2013). Similarly, male characters are attached with jobs that require physical strength which is stereotypically considered as men’s characteristic.

Furthermore, the male characters in this textbook are given more leadership positions than their female counterparts. On page 30 in the book, a male character named Tomy is depicted

to have just been promoted as a branch manager of a company in London, and a female colleague writes a note to congratulate him on his success. On the other hand, the same success of advancing career is not given to any female character in the book. Other examples of leadership positions attached to male characters in the book are company director and village head. The lack of portrayal of female characters holding superior positions in the textbook may create false conclusion among students that having strong leadership and advanced career with male characteristics. Despite all this, the book also tries to portray some non-stereotypical profession on both genders as can be seen in the table.

2.3 Non-professional activities done by female and male characters

Table 6: List of non-professional activities done by female and male characters

Female	Male
Play basketball	Play guitar
Draw	Attend a party
Paint	Learn to drive
Watch movies	Join a speech contest
Read novels and stories	Play in a band
Scuba-diving	Play football
Stay at home	Go fishing
Bake cookies	Go hiking
Meet an idol	Repair cars
Exercise at the gym	

The list shows that male characters are depicted as more active in society than the female characters. This is indicated from several activities done by male characters that involve interacting with other people, such as attending a party, playing in a band and joining a speech contest. By attaching this activities to male characters, the book seems to send out message that men mingle with other people outside their work. Meanwhile, none of these activities are mentioned to be done by female character. Instead, female characters are given activities that

mostly or likely can be done in solitary such as drawing, painting, watching movies, reading novels, scuba-diving, and baking. Such portrayals might lead to misconception among students and adults alike that it is permissible for men to go out and spend their time out of the house and see other people as much as they want while women are expected to behave better by spending more time at home (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003).

However, the book seems to try to redeem all the stereotypical portrayals by presenting few unconventional activities done by its female characters. These activities are playing basketball, scuba-diving, and exercising at the gym. These depictions of unconventional activities done by female characters should be praised because the book seems to give the female students reading it some idea what interesting outdoor activities they can do, and that there are women who are doing these activities in the real world.

In conclusion, although the book has given more choices of non-professional activities for its female characters than for its male characters, the book still portrays some stereotypical activities for both genders. Nevertheless, the study cannot overlook the book’s attempt to portray women as being adventurous by attaching unconventional sports to several of its female characters. It is no doubt that such attempts need to be made more frequently and stereotyping should be reduced.

2.4 Adjectives used to describe female and male characters

Table 7: List of Adjectives Used to Describe Female and Male Characters

Female	Male
Gorgeous (2x)	Cute
Cute	Strong
Beautiful	Diligent
Kind	Proud
Patient	Amazing

High-spirited
Respectable
Ridiculous
Unruly

The list shows that male characters are depicted with nearly twice as many adjectives as those used to describe female characters (9 to 5 respectively). Although this representation gap in this aspect is still considered as “balanced” based on the decided minimal threshold, it is inclined towards a fairly balanced representation due to its close proximity to the maximum margin of being “balanced”.

The list also indicates that the female characters are generally described with adjectives highlighting physical appearance such as gorgeous, cute, and beautiful. In contrast, only two adjectives are showing male physical appearance while the rest indicate behavior and attitude. This is an undercharacterization of women because it may make students associate women with a narrow characterization that is only related to their physical attractiveness (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003).

Furthermore, male characters in the book are depicted with more varied adjectives than the female characters. Female characters are attributed with positive adjectives, meaning they are pictured as individuals with favorable qualities that make them what the society consider as good individuals. Meanwhile, negative adjectives are found to be used to describe male characters, and these give them a bit of unfavorable characterization. This may indicate the stereotyping that exists in some societies that believe that a little bit of naughtiness in young boys are acceptable, or even expected. This is in line with one of the general comparisons existing between women and men, saying that men are aggressive while women are passive or that men are rough while women are gentle (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003).

3. The Use of Language by Female And Male Characters

The aspects that are discussed in this section are verbosity, the use of question form, and the use of intensifier. Analysis on the finding is done by referring to theories on women's and men's language by Lakoff (1973) and Coates (1986).

3.1 Verbosity

According to Lakoff (1973) and Coates (1986), one of the characters distinguishing women's use of language to men's is the amount of talk. Women are believed to be more talkative than men are and have a wider range of vocabulary. However, it is also believed that this phenomenon is only prominent when the topic being discussed is of an area that is commonly relegated to them.

First of all, the study found that female characters in the textbook understudy *do* speak more than the male characters do. This is reflected from Table 4 on the amount of talk by each gender in mixed-gender dialogs. The tables show that although the number of female characters is less than that of the male characters, the number of words uttered by the former is more than that uttered by the latter.

The result of further study on these dialogs shows that female characters do not always speak more than the male characters. Rather, the character from a particular gender speaks more than the other does only on certain topics. It can be concluded from on the perusal of these dialogs that women are generally considered to be more talkative than men when it comes to conversation in which there are expected to give their opinion or express personal feelings such as when talking about their idol and giving congratulatory remark on someone's success.

On the other hand, a dialog in the book reveals that a male character speaks more than the female counterpart does when they are talking about monument. The male character in the dialog only talks about facts: what the monument is built for and the experience he has at the monument. Not once does he expresses in his talk

his personal opinion or emotion either about the place or the experience he has. This seems to suggest that men are more interested in talking about facts compared to women. It suggests that men in general tend to speak based on fact and findings rather than emotion as women generally do.

2.2 The use of question form

Another characteristic that is believed to distinguish women's language is the frequent use of question intonation in their speech where men usually use statement or declarative sentence (Lakoff, 1973). Other earlier studies in this aspect also indicate difference in the nature of question forms that women and men use in interactive communication. An example would be the use of questions tags by both genders. Those studies reveal that while women use question tags to show their attitude or feelings towards the listener, men use them to confirm their knowledge or certainty about the proposition being discussed.

The question tags by female characters found in the textbook understudy generally indicate their opinion instead of their certainty about something. This finding is in line with what is proposed by Lakoff in her article (1973), saying that question tag, which syntactically is an intermediate between a full statement and a question, is used when the speaker does not have full confidence in the truth of a claim she or he is making. This type of sentence is believed to be spoken mostly by women because by using it they will be able to avoid committing themselves, and therefore they are able to avoid being into conflict with the addressee. Conflict, in turn, is something that women prefer to stay away from.

On the other hand, although the study cannot find any use of question tags by male characters, it finds another pattern that is relevant to the notion of men's confidence regarding their knowledge. Instead of using question tag when seeking confirmation for their knowledge, male characters in the textbook tend to declare a statement which is then followed with outright

question about the accuracy of the information. The following snippet of a conversation exemplifies this finding.

Ditto	: Cita, congratulations for being the first winner of the school story telling competition! Excellent. You really did it well.
Cita	: Thanks, Ditto.
Ditto	: I heard that you will be the representative of our school in the story telling competition of our regency. Is it true?
Cita	: Yes, you're right.

Figure 1: The example of how male characters prefer to seek confirmation on their knowledge

Although the male character in the example above does not use question tag in his sentence, his question indicates his attempt to confirm his knowledge about the female character. He might not be sure of the information he has collected, but he boldly asks the female character to give the more accurate information by asking if what he has heard is true or not. This speech attitude indicates assertiveness or directness which is generally attributed to men (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003).

This difference on how a female character and a male character seeks confirmation on their certainty may reflect speech pattern between both gender in real life communication, which unfortunately contributes in confirming the stereotyped traits of women and men that societies believe to be true. While women tend to indirectly ask confirmation on their knowledge by using question tags, men are reported to go with an outright yes-or-no question which is pragmatically more assertive. However, female and male characters in the textbook are portrayed as equally inquisitive when it comes to open ended questions regarding something that they have no information of.

2.3 The use of intensifier

Intensifiers, which are defined by *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* as words that are used to indicate grades of adjectives, verbs, or adverbs, are used to add force or emphasis to a statement

(*Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 2010). These intensifiers are usually in the form of adverbs; among them are *so*, *very*, *really*, *completely*, and *absolutely*. The use of such words is believed to be a characteristic of women's language rather than men's.

In regards to this, the research found that both female and male characters in the textbook understudy use intensifiers in their sentences. The most commonly used intensifier in this textbook is *very*. Nevertheless, the study revealed that female characters use intensifier 25 times while male characters use it only 10 times. Converting this number into percentage, it is recorded that the use of such adverbs by female characters constitutes 71,43% of its total use throughout the textbook.

In addition, the study also found that the use of intensifier by female characters is always to emphasize their feeling about something or someone. This indicate that female character's use of intensifier is more emotion-oriented compared to male character's use of the same word class. Meanwhile, male characters use the words not only to give emphasis to their feeling, but also to modify an action done by someone, and this, in turn, suggests that men's speech are oriented more to the addressee and the topic being discussed instead of to the speaker's feelings about the addressee or about the topic.

Comparisons on how intensifiers are used by female and male characters add into the insight regarding discussion on differences between women's and men's speech. However, the fact that the textbook attaches intensifiers highlighting emotion to female characters does not necessarily mean that in real life men do not do that. It simply indicates that the inclination to give such speech style to female characters may be due to the fact that the team designing the book consists of female authors.

Conclusion

In the English textbook entitled *Bahasa Inggris* designed by The Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia for students in Grade X

of Senior High School, it has been found that female and male characters are generally represented equal. This is true especially in their representation in dialogs in which both genders are given equal chance to take part in and initiate conversations. However, in terms of characters' occurrence in illustration and texts, male characters dominate visibility. Another imbalanced portrayal is also found in how the book attaches jobs for its characters in which male characters are given twice more choices of profession and more leadership position than female characters. In non-professional activities, the book depicts female characters as less active and sociable than the male characters. In terms of gender depiction using adjectives, the book uses more adjective highlighting physical appearance for female characters while for male characters it attributes adjectives such as *proud*, *amazing*, *high-spirited*, and *respectable* which give impression that men are dynamic and driven.

In terms of differences in language use by female and male characters, it is found that verbosity is not solely shown in female. Male characters also speak more when the topic of the conversation is something of their interest. The study also finds that only female characters use question tags to seek confirmation of information that they are not sure of. Finally, it is also found in the study that female characters use more intensifiers than male characters do (25 to 10 respectively). Female characters mostly use it to emphasize their emotion while male characters use it more to modify actions than to show feelings.

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